

BANNER



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LITERARY.

THE PURITAN SUNDAY.

We zealots, made up of stiff clay,
The sour-looking children of sorrow,
While not over jolly to-day,
Resolve to be wretched to-morrow.

We can't for a certainty tell
What mirth may molest us on Monday,
But our system obscures its indulgence:
Let us all be unhappy on Monday.

The face of kind Nature is fair,
But our system obscures its indulgence:
How sweet is a breath of fresh air!
But our rules don't allow this indulgence.

These gardens, their walks, and green bowers,
Might be free to the poor man one day;
But no; the glad plants and gay flowers
Mustn't bloom or smell sweet on Sunday.

What though a good precept we strain,
'Till hateful and hurtful we make it?
What though, in this pulling the rein,
We may draw it so tight as to break it?

Around we forbid folks to roam,
For fear they get social or frisky;
But, of course, they can sit still at home,
And get drowsily drunk upon whisky.

COMMUNICATIONS.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF MAGIC.

THE "BLACK ART."—(CONTINUED.)

Charms and amulets have not been confined to the devotees of witchcraft and sorcery. The Church has affected to condemn magic, the source from whence she sprang, and to denounce the practice of sorcery as wicked and intolerable; yet practicing at the same time a peculiar sorcery of her own.

"The storm was laid by the use of holy water, or by the revelation of the cross, whose mystic virtue was celebrated by early patristic writers. The *Agnus Dei* protected from lightning, fire, flood, and sin. The random consultation of the sacred volume foretold the coming event; the recital of the Lord's Prayer was prescribed for the cure of wounds; the relics of a female saint were dipped in the river to procure rain; while the skin of some wild beast, over the Christian door, recalled the *rostrum lupi* which the pagan householder nailed up as a defense against witches."—*Westminster Review*, 1864, *Art. Astrology and Magic*.

A friend in this city, well versed in mystic lore, informs me that the celebrated letter from Jesus to Abgarus, Governor of Edessa, (see Apocryphal New Testament,) was used in England as a charm, and to this day may be found in many English households, occupying a prominent place in the dwelling. They had usually an aged appearance, from actual age, or, like some of our Spanish grants, from being smoked in the chimney. It has an engraving of a chubby boy turning over a stone, under which is seen the "holy letter," with the word "Letter" printed on it. It also gravely informs us on the margin, that whosoever shall place the "holy letter" in a prominent place in his house, shall be protected from fire, lightning, thieves, witchcraft, demoniacal influence, plagues, murrain among his cattle, etc. So common did it become that the mountebank of the circus placed it prominently among the list of prizes in his lottery; and it was the last resort of the peddler, when nothing else would sell. And in this nineteenth century, we are told by the daily papers, a Mr. F. Wilson has filed his application in the U. S. District Court for the copy-right of this monkish fable and forgery! Martin Luther, the hero of the great schism in the Christian Church, believed in charms and spells, and favors us with the following charm:

"Experience has proved the toad to be endowed with valuable qualities. If you run a stick through three toads, and, after having dried them in the sun, apply them to any pestilential humor, they will draw out all the poison, and the malady will disappear."

The Church and its attaches were not so much opposed to spells and philters while they monopolized them, as they were to their being used outside of the pale of their authority. The following still remains unreplicated in the "Constitutions and Canons Ecclesiastical" of the Church of England:

"Neither shall any minister, not licensed as aforesaid, presume to appoint or hold any meeting for Sermons, commonly termed by some Prophecies or Exercises, in market-towns or other places, under the said pains: nor, without such license, to attempt, upon any pretense whatever, either of possession or obsession, by fasting and prayer to cast out any devil or devils, under the pain of imprisonment, or cozenage, and deposition from the ministry."

In the case of the absence of a licensed exorcist, the devil, having possession of a poor demented creature, could revel in the human habitation without let or hindrance, by law made and provided in such cases.

Fascination was another phase of sorcery, of a higher grade than the charms of the witch or wizard. It dispensed with the physical media of mineral, vegetable, and animal production, and depended entirely on mental effort; it resembled the Mesmeric philosophy, and was probably the source of Mesmer's ideas. According to Agrippa: there proceeds from the human eye an essence of the nature of the soul, which possesses wonderful power over others, when properly directed to their eyes:

"Know," says he, "therefore, that men are there most bewitched, when with often beholding they direct the edge of their sight to the edge of their sight that bewitch them, and when their eyes are reciprocally intent one upon the other, and when rays are joined to rays, and lights to lights, for then the spirit of the one is joined to the spirit of the other, and fixeth its sparks."

For a detailed account of ancient fascination, I refer the reader to a small work on "Fascination," by Dr. Newman, published by Fowler & Wells, and "Spiritualism Tested," by George W. Samson, D. D.; also to Brittan's "Man and His Relations."

Paracelsus, speaking of fascination, says:

"It is possible that my spirit, without the help of the body, and through a fiery will alone and without a sword, can stab and wound others. It is also possible that I can bring the spirit of my adversary into an image, and then double him up and lame him according to pleasure. You are to know that the exertion of the will is a great point in the art of medicine. Man can hang disease on man and beast through curses; but it does not take effect by means of strength of character, virgin wax, or the like: the imagination alone is the means of fulfilling the intention. Every imagination of man comes from the heart, for this is the sun of the microcosm; and out of the microcosm proceeds the imagination into the great world. Thus the imagination of man is a seed, which is material. Determined imagination is a beginning of all magical operations. Fixed thought is also a means to an end. And when any one will lame or stab another, he must first in imagination thrust the weapon into himself; he must conceive the wound, and it will be given through the thought, as if it were done with the hands. . . . There requires no conjuration and ceremonies; circle making and incensing are mere humbug and juggling. The human spirit is so great a thing that no man can express it; as God Himself is eternal and unchangeable, so also is the mind of man. If we rightly understood the mind of man, nothing would be impossible to us on earth. . . . Because men do not perfectly imagine and believe, the result is that the arts are uncertain, while they might be perfectly certain."—J. W. MACKIE.

"GOD REVEALED TO THE INTELLECT."

A respected friend called my attention to a chapter headed as above in A. J. Davis' late work, "The Arabians." He told me that in it were contained unanswerable arguments in proof of the existence of God. I was pleased to hear that a writer, usually so lucid in language, had engaged in so laudable an undertaking, therefore I expected to find the doctrine clearly stated and logically elucidated, and was partly prepared to receive it; for I have no objection to offer against the existence of God, or any other entity, only against such evidences as are usually advanced. I accept the language which a writer in *Fraser's Magazine* places in the mouth of the Positivist: "Do you mean to tell us, who read human beliefs by the full blaze of science, and laugh at the superstitions which have swayed each successive age, that because men believe in a God, and believe that they have an immortal soul, therefore a God and an immortal soul are realities? Mind, we do not say they are not; what we seek is proof—logical proof." Eagerly and carefully have I read this chapter, seeking for "logical proof," and have been disappointed. We find in the beginning of the chapter, that at one time Mr. Davis was "almost persuaded" to be an Atheist; that he had failed to find in Paley a solution of the great problem of causation; that he found his argument illogical. So far, his experience and mine run in parallel lines. When scarcely more than a boy, a clergyman—a good, venerable old man, from whom I had received the most of my religious education—loaned me Paley's "Natural Theology," in order to counteract some heretical notions which he imagined were leading me astray from his fold. I read the book, and from it received my first Atheistical impressions. Till then, I thought that Atheists existed only in name; but the immense labor and research spent in describing the mechanical construction of the eye, in which the means were demonstrated as perfectly adapted to the end, convinced me not only that there were Atheists, but that they possessed intellects of no mean order. I examined his argument, and extended it to Deity itself. If design proved a Designer—if the perfect adaptation of every thing to its respective uses proved an Intelligent Being as the originator—how much more can in the same way be proved an originator or designer of God Himself. I was sadly troubled. If the God of my religious education existed, I was on damning ground, and the policy of having "two strings to my bow" was ever before my mind. But I could not command my reason to be circumscribed by policy; like Mr. Davis, "I teased philosophy, science, and literature, with endless questionings, but all in vain. I plunged in fierce excitements, but no solace was there. The infinite void in my want-nature would not thus be filled." At this point the lines of our experience diverge, his to Theism, mine to Atheism. He dates his conversion from the time his eye fell upon the sentence in Plato, "God geometrizes." And he says: "In my wild enthusiasm, I called out to the little birds on the green boughs, trilling their cheerful farewells to departing day, 'Sing on, sunny birds; sing on, sweet minstrels; lo, ye and I have still a God!'" Having thus found his

Savior, who delivered him from Atheistic darkness into the light of the true and living God, it was not too much to expect that he would manifest some sympathy for those who had not received the like good blessing; judge, then, of my disappointment in finding Mr. Davis, like a true theologian, treating the Atheist as an alien and an outlaw from all common respect and social civility. He associates the name of the Atheist with the vilest epithets, in that cowardly, insinuating manner, which only theologians know how to assume; such as "insanity," "shallow minds," "lunacy," "mad Atheist," "fool," "baboons," "moral felons of the universe," "unprincipled Atheist," "blasphemies," etc. All this the Atheist is expected to read and receive with patience and all due humility, because of the assumed authority of an illuminated teacher. Being neither a profound logician, algebraist, nor geometrician, it may be considered presumptuous in me to thus endeavor to place my thoughts before the readers of the BANNER; for, says Mr. Davis, "I will not debate the question with any person unacquainted with algebra, geometry, and the rules of strict logic"; from which we may conclude that those who are not mathematicians and logicians should receive God on trust from those who are thus qualified, as people used to receive the Bible from those who were educated in Greek and Hebrew. I have read "God Revealed to the Intellect," but have received no revelation of God to my intellect; and though, according to Mr. Davis' reasoning, my mind must therefore be of the baboon type, I will nevertheless hazard the experiment of stating the difficulties which stand between me and the reception of his revelation of God. ESOP, JR.

FREEDOM OF THOUGHT.

The human mind, from the first dawn of consciousness, is filled with the questions of the Whence? Why? and Whither? of all existing things. These questions, as asked by every one as soon as he can speak and begins to think, have never yet been fully solved, even by the wisest that have ever lived on our earth. Many, indeed, have been the answers given to these questions, from that of the parent's evasive or traditional reply, to that of the most learned philosophers in science and metaphysics; yet a correct solution has never been given to error. It has been claimed by some theologians that the Bible has long ago settled these difficult questions for us. But the mind is compelled to think, and it cannot long be kept in bondage to what it finds and knows to be error, although held up as truth by the authority of Church and State.

Never was there a time when the minds of the masses were so free to question all authority as now, and so resolutely bent on arriving at a better and more satisfactory solution of these momentous problems of life and its ultimate destiny. Even women and children are beginning to ask questions which can be put aside no longer; and they are asking for the bread of life, and refuse to accept a stone instead. They have rights which are too little respected; and the first of these is that of asking questions, and of knowing the Why of a demand or command, before yielding blind and implicit obedience to what may be both unwise and unjust. No authority should be obeyed that is not founded in wisdom and love, let it come from whatever source, parental, social, civil, or ecclesiastical; for thinking minds have long since exploded the idea of the "Divine right" of kings or priests to rule over nations or the souls of men; and thought is now free, with full fledged pinions, to soar away down the past, over the sea of Chaos, where there is no pinnacle of rest from its airy flight, and, turning upward from those regions of the unknown, mount the heights of the present centuries, and, by their beacon lights, launch out upon the unexplored realms of the future, to return, bird-like, laden with stores of knowledge, wherewith to build a home of happiness. The mind puts forth questions as the tree puts forth buds and leaves, that it may bring forth fruits or answers of ultimate truths. It is painful to see the child's earnest questions turned away by a frivolous answer or a deaf ear, and it may be, by a blow on its own, that may reach those of the soul, closing them forever from the promptings of its spirit for knowledge. Christ asked questions of the learned doctors of the law when only twelve years old, and astonished them with his words of wisdom. I had rather ask a child what God is, than the most learned Divine. We should listen reverently to the murmurings of these pure life-fountains, which have not yet been defiled with the turbid waters of the impure stream into which they all flow. Upon this silver sea of consciousness within us, all we know of God and spirit must be mirrored and reflected; and it should be kept free from the distorted images of the false gods and false ideas of sin and its future punishments. We are, like notes of music, to be put in our appropriate places upon the great scale of life's eternal anthem, whence celestial harmony may flow on forever. L. H.

HENRY WARD BEECHER says: "Life would be a perpetual flea-buzz if a man were obliged to run down all the incoherences, inveteracies, insinuations, and suspicions which are uttered against him." Empirically true.

A Little Plain Talk.

From the good old times when Eve ate the apple, and gave the core to that paragon of wisdom, grace, and perfection, Adam, down to the present hour, woman has borne the blame of nearly all the misfortunes and crimes that have afflicted or disgraced the human race, but nothing more dark and horrible has ever been laid to her charge than the crime of feticide, or child-murder, which is said to be so common among American women at the present time. If the accusation is just—and I believe it is to some extent—then I hold it to be the duty of every true man and woman to take a determined stand against it, and to use all the power and influence they possess, to overcome and eradicate an evil so monstrous in its nature, and so utterly destructive to all the highest and most Divine instincts of humanity. A crime so great admits of no defense or extenuation; yet, with all due deference, I beg leave to offer a few suggestions upon the subject, though, in an article like this, I can only touch briefly upon a few points.

And, first, I would ask, are women wholly to blame in the matter? Is the husband and father, who assists in the commission of the crime, or quietly allows it to be committed, less guilty than the wife and mother? Nay, is he not quite as often the prime mover in procuring it to be done? Are not men as often dissatisfied at the prospect of an "addition to the family" as women can be? and do they not growl and grumble at the inconvenience and expense, and, of course, blame the helpless wife for the whole of it? Yet, what man among them all will place a check upon his own passions, or forego a single gratification, in order to prevent such "unfortunate accidents"? I have no doubt that many a poor woman has been driven, by the displeasure and reproaches of the husband, to risk her own life in the effort to rid herself of that which, otherwise, she would have held sacred as her own soul.

Again, many of these women have been brought up in ignorance, and actually do not know that they are committing any crime; and this ignorance is to be attributed directly to the doctors, who have always taught, at least until the last few years, that, until after the fourth month, the human embryo possesses neither life nor motion; therefore there could be no harm in its destruction before that time. Indeed, I have, within the last two years, heard a physician "in good standing" assert that the fetus never possessed life or sensation previous to the fourth month.

Then, again, many hold the opinion that the child has no soul or spirit, no immortal part or principle, until its birth at the full time; and that, if death occurs before birth, "it is as though it had never been." Women have been kept in gross ignorance in regard to these matters, and the doctors and the preachers, the self-constituted teachers and exemplars of the people, are to blame for it. If doctors are really so ignorant of the first principles of their so-called profession, they are unfit to be trusted in any case; and if they willfully deceive the people, and are known to lend themselves to the destruction of innocent life, they are knaves and villains, and should be driven from decent society by the contempt and execration of all honest men and women.

If this dreadful crime is so common, why do not our "ministers of the gospel" lift up their voices against it? If they are God's messengers, sent by Him, why do they not explain to poor sinners the meaning of the command, "Thou shalt not kill"? Why do they never speak against it from the pulpit, denounce it everywhere, in public and in private, here a little, and there a little, using all their influence to prevent the commission of such a heinous wrong? Ah! it is such a delicate subject! it won't do to meddle with it! modesty forbids! it is best to say nothing about such things; we might hurt some one's feelings, or give offense! No, the cowards! they dare not denounce such things; for many of them would but condemn themselves; for it is well known that premature births and abortions occur quite often in the houses of some of these holy men; and Heaven help them! even they are not above suspicion in these degenerate times. All honor to the Roman Catholic priests, who have the sense and courage to instruct their congregations in such matters! and if the ministers of other denominations would but stop "howling" about the sin of dancing, the wickedness of theater-goers, and the desecration of the Lord's day, and devote their energies to the prevention of a real and tangible wickedness, they would gain more honor in this world, and more glory in the world to come.

To Spiritualists, then, belongs the great work of education in these most important branches of human knowledge; to teach men and women the true ends and aims of the marriage relation, the beauty and holiness of parentage, the sacredness of human life, and the grand and glorious destiny of the immortal soul. Only thus can these dreadful abuses be reformed.

Remember always, O friends, that "ignorance is the mother of crime," and "temper justice with mercy"; and, above all, do not condemn American women as a whole for the vices and crimes of the few; do not fasten upon them a re-

proach so bitter and shameful that it will make them a scoff and by-word for all the world, and render the honorable title "*American woman*" a term of contempt and execration, synonymous with "child-murderess"! A. JEAN.

A Visit to the Insane Asylum.

EDS. BANNER:—A few days ago, I made it convenient to visit the Insane Asylum, justly the pride of California; and I must confess that I was very agreeably disappointed; the truth had not been told me as to the extent of the grounds, buildings, neatness, etc. Much better provision, indeed, is made for the insane than for the sane subjects of the State. I must not use the term "citizens," because it would not include women; and we are all subjects, truly. I found the Resident Physician all that could be expected; and he in person went with me through the wards occupied by the females, and then he directed the little druggist to show me through the men's wards. Having got through, I inquired how many of the inmates of the institution had been sent there from the ranks of Spiritualism. Studying a moment, he informed me that there were none there then, but there had been some; but that "they got well and got away." "Good!" said I, instinctively. Quite a compliment indeed to Spiritualism, and all the better for his not knowing that I was a Spiritualist; and I did not reveal the secret.

Soon after entering upon our rounds among the females, we came across an elderly woman, rather good-looking and intelligent withal, having on glasses, and an open book in hand, indicating a studious person. The book was the New Testament, and she approached the Doctor *instantly*, to explain to him something about the second coming of Christ, drawn from that saying of Jesus, where he spoke of his Temple being destroyed, and that he would build it again. She insisted that he had come again to rebuild, etc. The Doctor, not willing to be doctored, "bluffed her off" by referring to the passage in her book, "Physician, heal thyself." Up to this time I had supposed the woman was the Matron of the institution, from all the appearances; but was thinking very fast how even a Matron should make so bold as to propose to instruct the Doctor. The Doctor passed on, but I lagged behind to hear her explanation. She said Christ had really come in spirit, and it was the Holy Spirit operating on the minds of the people there, that was causing the trouble. "That's the trouble," were her words—"the uninitiated calling it lunacy." I could not but with propriety remain to hear more, as the Doctor had got about through the ward. By inquiry, I learned that that woman had been there but a short time, and was from the ranks of Orthodoxy, as was evident from her using the term *spirit* in the singular. H.

Letter from New Jersey.

HAMMONTON, N. J., May 10th, 1868.

DEAR BANNER:—We will mention some things that we have been doing since we came here, and inform you how the cause we so much love has improved. We came to this place three years ago last month. There were Spiritualists here, but no organization. There was a variety of opinion. We met in a small hall, a part of which was used by a dentist and his wife, a milliner. When we had meetings, the hall had to be fixed up. The first thing necessary was to form an organization. They said to us, "We have tried to for four years, and could not." You recollect the Constitution, of which you wrote nearly every word, and which was adopted by us in San Francisco. We formed a Constitution from that, had a meeting notified, and, to the astonishment of all, it was almost unanimously adopted, and has been in operation ever since. Brother E. J. Fish, one of the best speakers, said to me the other day, that our Society was the best working organization he knew of; and we have progressed very well ever since. This little hall was owned by a man who was about to leave; our Society was limited in its means, and we were expecting to be left without a place of meeting. Many were feeling very bad about it. Mrs. E. and myself concluded that we would sell our place, and buy the house with the hall in it, and we did so. We went into it, and cleared it of dentists and milliners, and used it till last December, charging a very small rent; and, during nearly three years, took care of the hall, and found light and fuel without charge. While we were in this hall, Emma Harding came to see Mrs. Ellis and myself, and spoke once to an overwhelming audience, very much to their satisfaction. God bless her! she seemed to give a new impetus to our cause. We have Mr. Peebles settled close by us—say within a hundred rods—and Mr. Fish one-fourth of a mile; two as good speakers as there are. We have several good mediums, and our society is increasing. We have a fine lot of land, where five streets meet, near the center of the village, within one hundred rods of the depot. I induced a friend of mine to buy it about two years ago, thinking it would be wanted for a hall; and he did so, and let our Society have it for its cost. We have already erected a hall 30 by 50 feet, and 15 feet in the clear, with a basement. We commenced by subscription, and got as far as the

